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The German Spartacists

Their Aims and Objects

Official Declaration of the Spartacus Union

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The German Spartacists Their Aims and Objects

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On the 9th of November, 1918, the workers and soldiers of Germany overthrew the old régime. The bloody dream of subjecting the world to the domination of militarism vanished like smoke on the battlefields of France. The band of criminals who kindled the world conflagration and drove Germany into the sea of blood reached on that day the end of their career. The people, who were deceived for four years, and, in the service of Moloch, forgot their duties as cultured people, lost all sense of honour and humanity, and allowed themselves to be used in connection with any base act, finding themselves on the brink of an abyss, awakened from the stupor in which they were in for more than four years.

On the 9th of November the German workers arose to throw off the disgraceful yoke. The Hohenzollerns were driven out; soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies were elected.

But the Hohenzollerns were never more than the agents of the imperialist capitalists and junkers. The class rule of the capitalists—that was the real cause of the world war in Germany and France, in Russia and England, in Europe and America. The capitalists of all countries—these are the real initiators of the slaughter of peoples. International capitalism is the insatiate Moloch into whose bloody jaws are thrown millions upon millions of fresh human sacrifices.

The world war confronted society with a choice of two alternatives: either the continued existence of capitalism, with its consequent new wars and inevitable and speedy destruction due to chaos and anarchy, or the abolition of capitalist exploitation.

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With the end of the world war the class rule of the capitalists lost its right to existence. It is no longer capable of leading society out of the terrible economic chaos which the imperialist orgy has left in its wake.

The means of production were destroyed to a frightful extent. Millions of workers, the best and the soundest element of the working class, were slaughtered. Those left alive, upon returning home, will receive the mock welcome of poverty and unemployment. Starvation and disease threaten to sap the remaining strength of the people. Financial bankruptcy, as a consequence of the crushing burden of war debts, is inevitable.

Only Socialism can save the people from this bloody chaos, this gaping abyss. There is no other way. Only the world-wide proletarian revolution can establish order in place of this anarchy, put an end to the mutual extermination of the peoples, provide work and bread for all, and bring peace, freedom, and true culture to tortured humanity. "Down with wage labour!" Such is the battle-cry of the day. Wage labour and class rule must give way to work on a co-operative basis. The means of production must cease to be the monopoly of a class; they must become the common property of all. The present system of production, which is nothing but exploitation and robbery, must be abolished. No more exploiters or exploited. Production and the distribution of products must be regulated in the interests of the nation as a whole.

Instead of masters and wage slaves there will be free fellow-workers! Labour will cease to be a burden for anybody when it becomes the duty of all. An existence worthy of men will be assured to all who fulfil their duty towards society. Hunger will cease to be the curse of workers; it will be the punishment for idlers.

Only in such a society can slavery and mutual hatred among nations be destroyed. Only when such a society is established will the earth cease to be outraged by fratricidal conflicts. Only then shall we be able to say: "We have seen the end of war."

II.

The establishment of the Socialist order of society is the greatest task that ever fell to the lot of a class and of a revolution in the course of human history. This task involves the complete reconstruction of the State and an entire change in the social and economic foundation of society.

This change and this reconstruction cannot be accomplished by a decree issued by some officials, committee, or parliament. They can only be accomplished by the mass of the people themselves.

In all preceding revolutions it was a small minority of people who conducted the revolutionary struggle. This minority determined the goal, gave direction to the fight, and used the masses only as tools to secure victory for their own interests, the interests of the minority. The Socialist revolution is the first revolution which can secure victory for and through the great majority of the workers themselves.

It is the task of the proletarian mass not only clearly and consciously to determine the aim and direction of the revolution. It must also establish Socialism step by step through its own activity.

The main feature of the Socialist society is to be found in the fact that the great mass of workers will cease to be a governed mass, but, on the contrary, will itself live the full political and economic life and direct that life in conscious and free self-determination.

Therefore the proletarian mass must substitute its own class organs—the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils—for the inherited organs of capitalist class rule: the Federal Councils, Municipal Councils, Parliaments; applying this principle from the highest authority in the State to the smallest community. The proletarian mass must fill all governmental positions, must control all functions, must test all requirements of the State on the touchstone of Socialist aims and the interests of its own class.

Only by means of a constant, mutual action upon each other on the part of the masses and their organs—the

Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—can their activity fill the State with a Socialist spirit.

Likewise, economic reconstruction can go on only as a process carried on by the mass action of the working class.

More decrees on socialisation issued by high revolutionary authorities are of no more value than empty sounds. Only the working class, by its own efforts, can change these sounds into actuality. Only in a stubborn fight with capital, face to face in every enterprise, by their own direct pressure, by means of strikes, and by creating their permanent representative organs, can the workers secure control and, finally, the actual administration of production.

The workers must learn to transform themselves from mere machines, which the capitalist employs in the process of production, into free, active, thinking leaders of this process. They must acquire the sense of responsibility of active members of the commonwealth, which alone is the owner of all social wealth. They must develop zeal at work, without the whip of the employer, the highest productivity without the spur of capitalist drivers, discipline without a yoke, and order without domination. Highest idealism in the people's interest, strictest self-discipline, true civic spirit of the masses—these constitute the moral basis of a Socialist society, just as stupidity, egotism, and corruption are the moral basis of capitalism.

These Socialist civic virtues, as also knowledge and the ability to conduct Socialist industries, can be acquired by the workers only by personal activity and personal experience.

The socialisation of society can be accomplished to the fullest extent only by the persistent and uninterrupted struggle of the workers at all points where labour and capital, the people and the class rule of the bourgeoisie, meet face to face.

The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves.

III.

In bourgeois revolutions bloodshed, terror, and political murder were the indispensable weapons of the rising classes.

The proletarian revolution requires no terror for the realisation of its aims; it looks upon manslaughter with hatred and aversion. It has no need for such means because the struggle it conducts is not against individuals but against institutions. It enters the arena with no naive illusions, the dispersal of which would prompt it to have recourse to revenge. The proletarian revolution is not the desperate attempt of a minority forcibly to transform the world in accordance with its own ideal. On the contrary, it is the action of great masses, of millions of people, called upon to carry out their historic mission and to make a reality of what has become an historic necessity.

But the proletarian revolution is at the same time also the death knell of all slavery and oppression. This is the reason why the capitalists, junkers, petty bourgeoisie and officers, and the beneficiaries and parasites of exploitation and class rule, are rising like one man to fight to the death against the proletarian revolution.

It were madness to suppose that the capitalists will submit voluntarily to the Socialist verdict of a parliament or a national assembly, that they will calmly surrender their property, their profits, their privileges of exploitation. All ruling classes have fought obstinately to the end for their privileges. The Roman patricians, as well as the feudal barons of the Middle Ages, the English nobles and the American slaveowners, the boyars (large estate owners) of Wallachia and the silk manufacturers of Lyons—all shed rivers of blood. They trampled upon corpses, they committed murder, arson, and state treason, they precipitated civil war for the purpose of defending their privileges and power.

The imperialist capitalist class, as the last offspring of the caste of exploiters, surpasses all its predecessors as far as brutality, open cynicism, and rascality are concerned.

It will defend its "holy of holies"—its profits and privileges of exploitation tooth and nail. It will defend them with the cold-blooded viciousness which it manifested during the history of its colonial policy and during the last world war. It will move heaven and hell against the workers. It will mobilise the peasantry against the industrial workers. It will set the backward elements of the proletariat against the vanguard of Socialism. It will get its officers to commit massacres. It will attempt to nullify Socialist measures by a hundred-and-one methods of passive resistance. It will put in the way of the revolution twenty uprisings à la Vandée. To save itself it will invoke the assistance of the foreign enemy, the murderous armed force of a Clemenceau, a Lloyd George, or a Wilson. It will sooner turn the country into a smoking heap of ruins than voluntarily relinquish its power to exploit the working class.

This resistance must be put down with an iron hand, with the utmost energy. The power of the bourgeois counter-revolution must be met by the revolutionary power of the working class. The plots, schemes, and intrigues of the capitalist class must be countered by the ceaseless vigilance, clearness of vision, and readiness of the proletarian mass for action at any moment. The threatening dangers of counter-revolution must be met by the arming of the people and the disarming of the ruling classes. The obstructionist manoeuvres in Parliament on behalf of the capitalist class must be met by the active organisation of the workers and soldiers. The presence of the bourgeoisie everywhere and the thousands of means at its command must be overcome by the concentrated compact power of the working class developed to the highest possible degree. Only the united front of the entire German proletariat—the South German with the North German, the city workers with the agricultural workers, the working men with the soldiers—and the living spiritual bond of the German revolution with the International, the elevation of the German revolution to the height of the world revolution of the proletariat, can create that granite foundation upon which the structure of the future must be based.

The struggle for Socialism is the greatest civil war in history, and the proletarian revolution must prepare for this civil war the necessary weapons; it must learn to use them—to fight and to conquer.

By arming the compact mass of working people with full political power for the purposes of the revolution is established the dictatorship of the proletariat, and therefore the true democracy. True democracy, democracy that does not defraud the people, does not exist where the wage slave sits in would-be equality with the capitalist, or the farm hand with the landowner, in order to debate in parliamentary manner over questions most vital to them—true democracy is to be found only where the mass of the workers take the entire power of government into their toil-hardened hands in order to wield it over the heads of the ruling classes as the god Thor wielded his hammer.

To enable the proletariat to solve this problem the Spartacus Union demands:—

I.—As Immediate Means for Making the Revolution Secure.

1. The disarming of the entire police force, of all officers, as well as of the non-proletarian soldiers.
2. The seizure of all supplies of arms and ammunition, as well as of all war industries, by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.
3. The arming of the entire adult male population as the workers' militia. The formation of a red guard of the workers, as the active part of the militia, for the effective protection of the revolution against counter-revolutionary plots and risings.

4. Abolition of the commanding power of the officers and non-commissioned officers. The substitution of the voluntary discipline of the soldiers for the old brutal barrack discipline. Election of all superiors by the rank and file, with the right to recall these superiors at any time. Abolition of courts-martial.

5. The removal of all officers and ex-officers from the Soldiers' Councils.
6. Substitution of authorised representatives (Vertrauensmaenner) of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils for all political organs and authorities of the old régime.
7. Creation of a Revolutionary Tribunal to try the men chiefly responsible for the war and its prolongation, namely, the two Hohenzollerns, Ludendorff, Hindenburg, Tirpitz, and their fellow-criminals, as well as all conspirators of the counter-revolution.
8. Immediate seizure of all means of subsistence to secure provisions for the people.

II.—On the Political and Social Field.

1. Abolition of all separate states; a united German Socialist Republic.
2. Removal of all parliaments and municipal councils, their functions to be taken over by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and by the committees and organs of the latter bodies.
3. Election of workers' councils all over Germany by the entire adult population of working people of both sexes in cities and rural districts, along the lines of industries, and election of soldiers' councils by the soldiers, excluding the officers and ex-officers. The right of workers and soldiers to recall their representatives at any time.
4. Election all over Germany of delegates from the workers' and soldiers' councils to the Central Council of the W. and S. councils; the Central Council to elect the Executive Council as the highest organ of legislative and executive power. For the present the Central Council is to be convened at least every three months—the delegates to be re-elected each time—for the constant control of the activity of the

Executive Council and for the establishment of a living contact of the bulk of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in the country with their highest organ of government. The right of local W. and S. councils at any time to recall their representatives on the Central Council and send new ones in their stead in case the former do not act in accordance with the will of their constituents. The right of the Executive Council to appoint or remove the People's Representatives as well as the central authorities of the land.

5. Abolition of all class distinctions, titles, and orders; complete legal and social equality of the sexes.
6. Radical social legislation, reduction of working hours to avoid unemployment and to conform to the physical exhaustion of the working class occasioned by the world war; limitation of the working day to six hours.
7. Immediate, thorough change of the policy with regard to food, housing, health, and education in the spirit of the proletarian revolution.

III.—Further Economic Demands.

1. Confiscation of all crown estates and revenues for the benefit of the people.
2. Annulment of the state debts and other public debts, as well as all war loans, except those subscribed within a certain limited amount, this limit to be fixed by the Central Council of the W. and S. councils.
3. Expropriation of the land held by all large and medium-sized agricultural concerns; establishment of socialist agricultural co-operatives under a uniform central administration all over the country. Small peasant holdings to remain in possession of their present owners until they voluntarily decide to join the socialist agricultural co-operatives.

4. Nationalisation by the Republic of Councils of all banks, ore mines, coal mines, as well as all large industrial and commercial establishments.
5. Confiscation of all property exceeding a certain limit, the limit to be fixed by the Central Council.
6. The Republic of Councils to take over all public means of transport and communication.
7. Election of administrative councils in all enterprises, such councils to regulate the internal affairs of the enterprises in agreement with the workers' councils, regulate the conditions of labour, control production, and, finally, take over the administration of the enterprise.
8. Establishment of a Central Strike Committee which, in constant co-operation with the industrial councils, shall secure for the strike movement throughout the country uniform administration, socialist direction, and most effective support by the political power of the W. and S. councils.

IV.—International Problems.

Immediate establishment of connections with the sister parties abroad in order to place the socialist revolution upon an international basis and to secure and maintain peace through international brotherhood and the revolutionary rising of the international working class.

IV.

This is what the Spartacus Union stand for!

And because it wants this, because it calls for it, struggles for it, because it is the socialist conscience of the revolution—it is hated, persecuted, and slandered by all open and secret enemies of the revolution and of the working class.

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"Crucify him!" call the capitalists, trembling for fear of losing their money-bags.

"Crucify him!" call the petty-bourgeoisie, the officers, the anti-semites, the press lackeys of the capitalist class, trembling for the flesh-pots of capitalist class rule.

"Crucify him!" call men like Schiedemann who, like Judas Iscariot, have sold the workers to the capitalist class and are trembling for the shekels of their political power.

"Crucify him!" repeat, like an echo, the duped, the deceived, the misled elements of workers and soldiers, who do not know that they are attacking their own flesh and blood when they attack the Spartacus Union.

In hatred and slander are united against the Spartacus Union all who are counter-revolutionists, enemies of the people, anti-socialists, all who are ambiguous, confused, afraid of light. This only proves that the heart of the revolution is beating in the Spartacus Union, that the future belongs to us.

The Spartacus Union is no party wanting to climb into power on the shoulders of the mass of workers. The Spartacus Union is only the conscious party of the proletariat. At every turn it calls the attention of the general body of workers to their historic duties. At every stage of the revolution it fights for the final goal of Socialism, and in all national questions it represents the interests of the international revolutionary working class.

The Spartacus Union refuses to share government power with the lackeys of the capitalist class, the Scheidemann-Ebert element, because it sees in such co-operation an act of treason against the basic principles of Socialism, an act calculated to paralyse the revolution and strengthen its enemies.

The Spartacus Union will also refuse to take over the power of government merely because the Scheidemann-Ebert element have completely discredited themselves and the Independent Socialist Party, through the co-operation with them, has reached a blind alley.

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The Spartacus Union will never take over the power of government otherwise than by a clear manifestation of the unquestionable will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of Germany. It will only take over the power of Government by the conscious approval by the mass of the workers of the principles, aims, and tactics of the Spartacus Union.

The proletarian revolution can reach full clearness and ripeness only by struggling gradually, step by step along the Golgotha path of the workers' own bitter experiences through defeats and victories.

The victory of the Spartacus Union is not in the beginning but at the end of the revolution : it is identical with the victory of the great mass of the Socialist working class.

Arise, proletarians ! To the battle ! We have to struggle against a world, to conquer a world.

In this last class struggle of history for the highest aims of humanity our motto towards the enemy is : "Hand on throat and knee on the breast!"

THE SPARTACUS UNION.

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